

Intelligence Report

DCI Interagency Balkan Task Force

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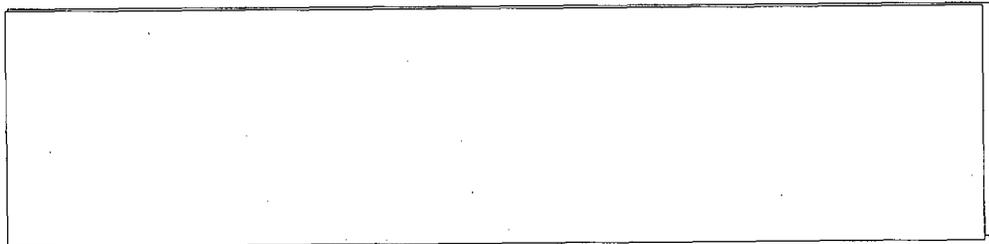
Possible Threats to US Members of the ICFY Mission

Serbian President Milosevic claimed to US diplomats this week that neither he nor Serbian and Montenegrin security officials believe there is a threat to ICFY personnel. Milosevic, moreover, assured US diplomats that US ICFY monitors would be protected. *Nonetheless we assess that US monitors at or near the Serbian-Bosnian border are vulnerable to being taken hostage by elements beyond Milosevic's control, particularly if the Serbs perceive a growing threat of NATO intervention in Bosnia.* ICFY head Nieminen plans to return US monitors to duty along the Bosnian border unless Washington objects, according to US Embassy reporting.

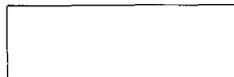


What is the Hostage Threat to US Personnel?

The Bosnian Serbs, who already have demonstrated a willingness to take hostages, may attempt to have US ICFY monitors seized:



- The Bosnian Government has provided reporting of [redacted] [redacted] conversations among Bosnian Serb leaders, including "President" Karadzic and BSA Commander Mladic, in which the possible seizure of US ICFY personnel as hostages is discussed; these conversations *appear plausible.*
- In one conversation, the Bosnian Serb leadership discussed involving Serbian nationalist Vojislav Seselj--who opposes ICFY's presence and Belgrade's embargo against Pale--in taking the US personnel hostage. *Seselj's paramilitary forces may relish the opportunity to turn an American over to the Bosnian Serbs, a move that would hurt Milosevic's image. Milosevic has weakened Seselj's influence in the FRY, most recently imprisoning him for 20 days, but Seselj retains ties to the military and significant support among the populace.*



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- [redacted] the Bosnian Serb General Staff directed Serb militia leader Zeljko Raznjatovic ("Arkan") to take hostage US citizens that his forces could locate in the Bosnian safe areas of Srebrenica and Tuzla. *Arkan's apparently ongoing ties to Milosevic, however, may lessen the threat to ICFY from his forces.*
- The 32 US ICFY monitors are a large and accessible group of US citizens. If US ICFY personnel return to duty adjacent to Bosnian Serb-controlled areas, it will expose US personnel to numerous Bosnian Serbs--soldiers and civilians--entering the FRY daily at border crossings. [redacted]

Elements of the Serbian/Montegrin populace may assist or act on behalf of Pale in a hostage taking. Sympathetic Yugoslav Army (VJ) personnel, police or customs officials, the Serbian mafia, and relatives of Bosnian Serbs are all potential threats to the US monitors. Although most military, police, and customs personnel would not actively participate in securing hostages, some elements of the VJ are strongly sympathetic toward the Bosnian Serbs and may not intervene to prevent Bosnian Serb actions against Americans. [redacted]

Aside from hostage taking, the increase in tension in Bosnia could foster violence targeted at the monitors. Occasional warning shots have been fired and sporadic verbal threats have been directed toward the monitors throughout their tenure along the FRY-Bosnia border. A shot was also recently fired at the US Embassy from a passing vehicle. [redacted]

Will Serbian President Milosevic Protect the ICFY Personnel?

Serbia would need to increase significantly its military and police presence with the ICFY personnel to meet its assurances that ICFY monitors will be protected. *Even additional personnel, however, only diminishes the risk.* To date, [redacted] Serbian assurances of protection for ICFY monitors has not specified any new security measures being implemented. *Milosevic probably could best protect US citizens by using Serbia's internal security forces, a group whose loyalty Milosevic has scrupulously cultivated and maintained. Belgrade could better protect US ICFY personnel if the monitors remain clustered in hotels, whereas a return to ICFY duty at the border exposes monitors to greater risk. Milosevic probably has numerous reasons for protecting US personnel, including his continuing efforts to gain sanctions relief and avoiding a seizure of US personnel from FRY territory that would hurt his image at home and abroad.*

This memorandum was prepared by analysts of the DCI Interagency Balkan Task Force. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to Chief, DCI Interagency Balkan Task Force [redacted]

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~~Top Secret~~**What is the Effect on the Border Monitoring Mission?**

The understrength ICFY mission's ability to monitor the border is being further undermined by threats to US monitors. ICFY head Nieminen plans to return US monitors to duty along the Bosnian border unless Washington objects, according to US Embassy reporting. Nieminen is concerned about the viability of his mission in the absence of US monitors, particularly given that Paris is threatening to pull its 14 monitors from ICFY. Nieminen stated that French and American withdrawal would reduce the mission to 105 monitors, well below the 150 minimum he believes is needed. Nieminen believes ICFY should decide deployments and that nations reluctant to participate fully in the mission should be removed altogether. **The mission withdrew the 32 US monitors from the border after receiving a Bosnian intelligence warning a week ago of Bosnian Serb plans to seize US members of the mission as hostages.** According to Embassy Belgrade, the US monitors (mostly DoD-administered contract personnel and a few foreign service officers) are in hotels in the border towns near four of the mission's regional headquarters. []

The withdrawal of US personnel--the single largest contingent in the approximately 142 person mission--has reduced the mission's ability to monitor Belgrade's embargo on the Bosnian Serbs.

- According to Embassy reporting, mission leaders have probably reduced the number of crossings monitored around the clock from 16 to probably 12, and one of those would be manned by a single observer in violation of mission security procedures. The locations of the affected crossings are not yet known. []

Mission Strength--and Capabilities--Fluctuate

The Intelligence Community judges the mission has never been able to monitor enough crossings to certify that Belgrade has effectively closed its border to Bosnia. This assessment indicated the mission needed 400-450 observers to fulfill all its responsibilities and staff up to 30 of the most significant border posts, out of the more than 150 known major and minor crossings. []

Being chronically under strength has forced the mission to rely heavily on Yugoslav Army (VJ) efforts in Montenegro. The VJ constructed dozens of flimsy barriers last December and patrols some bypasses and minor crossings. [] VJ sympathies for the Bosnian Serb Army remain high and some VJ military resupply continues. The barriers are routinely breached and monitors note evidence of large truck traffic at some of the VJ sites. []

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